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United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolutions 36/151 and 65/205. It describes the recommendations for grants to beneficiary organizations that were adopted by the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture at its thirty-third and thirty-fourth sessions. The report also provides information on policy decisions adopted by the Board in implementation of the recommendations made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services with a view to further enhancing the activities of the Fund.

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I. Introduction

A. Submission of the report

1. The present report was prepared in accordance with the arrangements approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 36/151, by which it established the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. It presents the recommendations adopted by the Board of Trustees of the Fund at its thirty-third and thirty-fourth sessions, which were held in Geneva from 18 to 22 October 2010 and from 31 January to 4 February 2011, respectively. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights approved the recommendations on behalf of the Secretary-General. The present report complements the report on the activities of the Fund submitted to the Human Rights Council at its sixteenth session (A/HRC/16/31) in March 2011.

B. Mandate of the Fund

2. The Fund receives voluntary contributions from Governments, non-governmental organizations and individuals. In accordance with the practice established by its Board of Trustees in 1982, the Fund provides grants to non-governmental organizations that submit projects involving medical, psychological, social, financial, legal, and humanitarian or other forms of assistance to victims of torture and members of their families.

C. Board of Trustees

3. The Secretary-General administers the Fund through the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights with the advice of a Board of Trustees composed of five members acting in their personal capacity and appointed by the Secretary-General with due regard to equitable geographical distribution and in consultation with their Governments. In October 2008, the Secretary-General reappointed the following members for a final period of three years: Krassimir Kanev (Bulgaria), Savitri Goonesekere (Sri Lanka), Joseph Oloka-Onyango (Uganda) and Derrick Pounder (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland), and appointed Mercedes Doretti (Argentina) for a three-year term, renewable once.

4. The Board held its thirty-third session in Geneva from 18 to 22 October 2010 to examine applications for funding and make recommendations on grants to be allotted to beneficiary organizations for the period from January to December 2011. It held its thirty-fourth session from 31 January to 4 February 2011 to discuss mainly policy issues. At that session, the Board also awarded grants to projects from priority regions which had not been decided upon at its thirty-third session because insufficient information was available at that time, as well as to projects from priority regions which had applied in the period between sessions.

D. Admissibility criteria

5. Project admissibility criteria are outlined in the Fund's guidelines. They require a project to be presented by a non-governmental organization. The beneficiaries must be direct victims of torture and/or direct family members. Priority is given to projects providing direct assistance to torture victims, which could consist in medical or psychological assistance, help with social or financial reintegration through vocational training for victims, and various forms of legal assistance for victims or members of their families, including assistance in seeking redress or applying for asylum. Depending on the resources available, the Fund may finance projects to organize training programmes, seminars or conferences to allow health-care professionals or other service providers to exchange best practices. However, grant requests for projects involving investigation, research, studies, publications or similar activities are not admissible.

6. The Fund can provide emergency assistance to individuals in countries where no project is receiving support. This type of request is examined according to a specific procedure outlined in the Fund's guidelines. Detailed information on the various types of assistance provided through the projects financed by the Fund, as well as their impact on beneficiaries, can be found in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its fifty-eighth session (A/58/284, paras. 27-34).

II. Financial situation of the Fund

7. From 2006 to 2010, the Board had progressively increased the amount awarded in grants to projects worldwide. This had been possible because the income used during that period included both the yearly voluntary contributions and unallocated amounts carried over from previous years. Those amounts resulted from more efficient management of the Fund, including the change in cycle, closer monitoring of grantees and stricter reporting requirements. The Board had decided to use the carry-overs to increase the level of funding to projects, particularly in priority regions.

8. For 2011, however, the Board faced a shortfall of over US$ 2 million to continue to meet requests from grantees at the 2010 level, and thus decided on strategic cuts for the 2011 grants cycle. If no additional contribution is received in 2011, for 2012, the Board will still face a significant shortfall and might have to maintain or increase the strategic cuts for the 2012 grants cycle and place additional limits on the support it provides to new projects.

9. On the basis of the requests received for 2011, it is expected that approximately $22 million will be requested by organizations for 2012.

Contributions and pledges received

10. The table shows the contributions and pledges received since the last report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on the activities of the Fund (A/65/265). These contributions will enable the Board to make recommendations for grants at its thirty-fifth session, to be held from 17 to 21 October 2011. Grants recommended at the next session of the Board will be disbursed in January 2012 for the period from 1 January to 31 December 2012.

Contributions and pledges received from 5 August 2010 to 22 July 2011

Donor States	*Amount (United States dollars)*	*Date of receipt*
Andorra	28 550	21 December 2010
Argentina	3 405	31 January 2011
Canada	61 170	24 March 2011
Czech Republic	10 272	27 December 2010
Finland	180 025	3 September 2010
Germany	498 218	19 August 2010
Germany	407 407	11 May 2011
Greece	39 422	3 January 2011
Ireland	111 402	25 August 2010
Ireland	119 718	20 April 2011
Kuwait	10 000	7 April 2011
Liechtenstein	27 115	20 April 2011
Luxembourg	34 722	19 November 2010
Morocco	3 000	23 March 2011
Norway	164 826	24 August 2010
Norway	183 688	27 June 2011
Qatar	10 000	18 February 2011
Republic of Korea	95 000	21 November 2010
Republic of Korea	95 000	25 April 2011
South Africa	15 015	24 January 2011
Spain	334 672	29 December 2010
Turkey	10 000	23 August 2010
United Arab Emirates	9 982	9 May 2011
United States of America	7 100 000	13 September 2010
Total contributions	**9 552 609**	
Pledges 2011		
Afghanistan	500	
Belgium	284 900	
Denmark	383 656	
Total pledges	**669 056**	

III. Thirty-third and thirty-fourth sessions of the Board of Trustees of the Fund

11. The thirty-third session of the Board of Trustees was held in Geneva from 18 to 22 October 2010. During that session, the Board examined information prepared by its secretariat concerning 327 projects, including new applications for 2011, and the analysis of narrative, financial and audit reports on the use of grants

paid in previous years. It considered requests for new grants amounting to $20,688,284 for more than 300 projects providing direct assistance to victims of torture and their family members in 2011, as well as requests for 25 projects amounting to $858,754 for training and seminars for professionals assisting victims to exchange information on experiences and best practices.

12. As foreseen at its thirty-second session in February 2010, because of the decrease in the level of contributions received and the absence of pledges made in 2010, the Board was not in a position to maintain the level of funding of 2010 and had to decide on strategic cuts for the 2011 grants cycle. A decrease of 20 per cent was applied to all grants for projects located in countries in the group of Western European and other States, while all grants for projects located in other regions were reduced by 10 per cent. As a rule, support to new grantees was capped at a maximum of $20,000 instead of the usual $50,000. In addition, consideration of funding for training and seminars for professionals assisting victims was postponed to the thirty-fourth session in February 2011, subject to the availability of resources.

13. The Board of Trustees made recommendations for grants for the period from January to December 2011 for over 280 ongoing and 23 new projects of direct assistance in more than 70 countries, for a total amount of $9,525,050, to be paid in January 2011. The High Commissioner approved the recommendations on 22 November 2010 on behalf of the Secretary-General.

14. The Board recommended that $1,116,950 be set aside for projects that the Board could not consider at its thirty-third session because information to be submitted by the applicants was pending or visits had not yet been undertaken by a United Nations staff member, and which would be considered by the Board at its thirty-fourth session.

15. The thirty-fourth session of the Board of Trustees, held from 31 January to 4 February 2011, was devoted mainly to the discussion of policy issues, as well as a lessons-learned exercise to be used as a handover tool for the new members of the Board to be designated in August 2011 by the Secretary-General. The Board also considered additional grant requests for 2011 from projects in priority regions, and awarded $906,300 for 27 direct assistance projects, including 15 ongoing projects, 7 new projects, 5 new projects for which applications were received in the intersessional period, and 9 projects for training and seminars. In addition, the Board held meetings with Member States, institutional donors in the field of assistance to victims of torture, and representatives of non-governmental organizations.

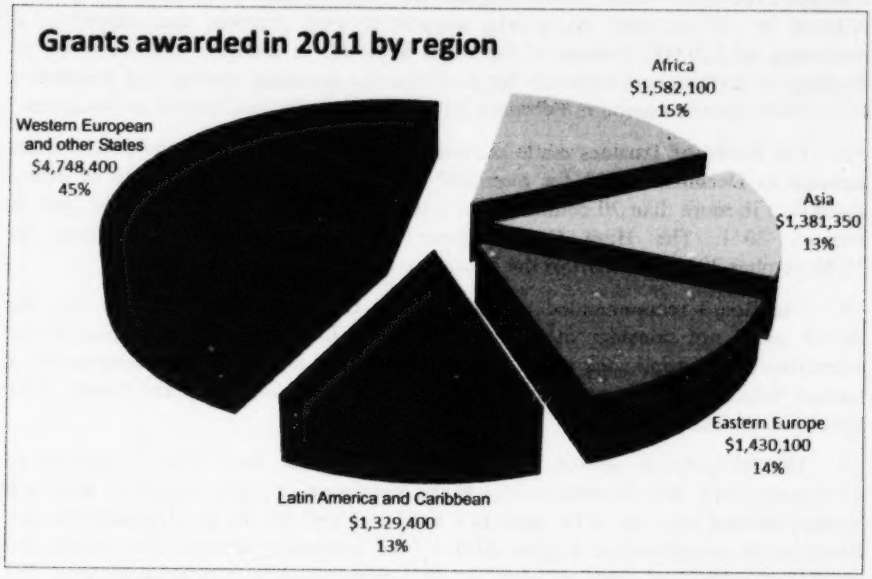
16. From February 2010 to August 2011, evaluation and monitoring visits of organizations already funded by the Fund or of potential grantees were undertaken by the members of the Fund secretariat, Board members and United Nations field presences in the following countries: Albania, Angola, Argentina, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Belgium, Burundi, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ecuador, Egypt, France, Germany, Guinea, Hungary, India, Ireland, Italy, Kazakhstan, Mozambique, Nepal, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, Rwanda, Republic of Korea, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Thailand, Turkey, Uganda, United Kingdom, United Republic of Tanzania, United States of America and Zimbabwe.

A. Recommendations adopted by the Board

17. At its thirty-third and thirty-fourth sessions, the Board of Trustees of the Fund made recommendations for grants for the period from January to December 2011 for more than 330 projects in over 70 countries, for a total amount of $10,431,350. The Board also recommended that $270,000 be set aside for intersessional and/or emergency grants for the year 2011. The figure shows the allocation of grants by region.

Grants awarded in 2011 by region

(United States dollars)



B. Policy decisions

Thirty-fourth session of the Board of Trustees

18. At its thirty-fourth session, the Board discussed issues related to information-sharing with other institutional donors, monitoring and evaluation missions and outreach.

19. The Board decided to establish a mechanism to make available to other institutional donors, formally and informally, and on a regular basis, information and findings regarding projects experiencing serious managerial and/or financial problems, including mismanagement and possible fraud.

20. The Board agreed to have the secretariat of the Fund participate in joint monitoring and evaluation missions with staff of the European Commission.

21. The Board discussed and made recommendations to the secretariat on a programme of events to commemorate the thirtieth anniversary of the Fund around the date of 26 June 2011. The Board wanted to seize this occasion as a memorable

opportunity to promote the work of the Fund. In that context a special website on the 30 years of the Fund was created.

C. Meetings with relevant actors in the field of assistance to victims of torture

Thirty-fourth session of the Board of Trustees

22. During the thirty-fourth session, the Board continued its practice of meeting with other institutional donors in the field of assistance to victims of torture, in particular with the representative of the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights of the European Commission, with a view to sharing information on their funding policies, evaluation and monitoring mechanisms and results and initiatives to build the capacity of grantees.

23. In addition, the Board held a meeting with Member States which was attended by some 12 delegations. In the context of that meeting, the Board invited two grantees to brief the Board and Member States on the assistance provided to victims with the support of the Fund. The Board provided extensive information on the Fund's recent developments, including the challenge of the current financial situation of the Fund and its concern about the significant decrease in contributions in the face of an ever-increasing demand for funding.

IV. Outstanding recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

24. As a result of the work undertaken during the reporting period, the Office of Internal Oversight Services considers that only one recommendation, No. 9, on a strengthened management system, is still being implemented.

Recommendation 9: strengthened management system

25. Applications for grants for 2012, as well as revisions of grants under the budget for 2011, continued to be submitted through the online grants system of the Fund. Moreover, the new external reporting module for grantees has been completed and put into service, enabling grantees to submit reports on the use of 2010 grants online. The secretariat continued to offer a direct technical assistance service via e-mail to all organizations using the system and replied to multiple queries from new and ongoing projects as well as potential grantees.

26. During the reporting period, the secretariat continued working on the further development of the internal administration module of the online grant system of the Fund. As a result, the internal administration module is currently being refined and tested with multiple query functions enabling the search of data and the generation of internal reports. The finalization of the internal administration module will bring to completion the introduction of an electronic management system for the Fund, resulting in the full implementation of the last remaining recommendation made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services in its report (E/CN.4/2005/55).

V. International Day in Support of Victims of Torture

27. On 26 June 2011, the Committee against Torture, the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment and the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture made the following statement to commemorate the International Day in Support of Victims of Torture and the thirtieth anniversary of the Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture:

States must ensure that all victims of torture obtain reparation, including humanitarian support through the United Nations Voluntary Fund

We have seen torture and ill-treatment continue to be widely practised in recent public demonstrations that have been held in numerous countries around the world. It is essential to reiterate that it is the obligation of States to prevent, prohibit, investigate and punish all acts of torture and other forms of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment. It is the obligation of States to respect the physical and mental integrity of all persons, ensure justice and accountability for victims and for the community as a whole, and bring those responsible for violations to justice.

Moreover, States must ensure that victims of torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment obtain reparation, including redress, and are awarded fair and adequate compensation and receive appropriate and comprehensive rehabilitation services. In this context, while international law and practice requires certain minimum standards and principles in relation to redress and reparations for victims of torture, we are concerned that some States only award formal rights which are often modest and peripheral to the justice systems.

We are equally dissatisfied by the lack of progress in institutionalizing basic principles and guidelines which seek to provide minimum standards for redress and reparations to victims. It is our conviction that victims must have a central role in holding torturers accountable for their actions. We would like to underline the preventive function of redress and reparation for victims of torture as part of the legal obligation to prevent torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. We therefore continue to support those States, organizations and other organs of civil society that are committed to eradicating torture and securing redress for all torture victims.

This year, the United Nations International Day in Support of Victims of Torture coincides with the thirtieth anniversary of the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture. During the past 30 years, the Fund has distributed over US$ 120 million to projects providing medical, psychological, legal, social and financial assistance to victims of torture and their family members, enabling victims to obtain redress and exercise their enforceable right to fair and adequate compensation, including as full a rehabilitation as possible. With the Fund's support, physicians, psychologists, forensics experts, social workers, lawyers and other concerned individuals or groups have employed a victim-centred approach to assist their clients for years on their long journey rebuilding their lives, while at the same time documenting the use and effects of torture.

We express our gratitude to all donors to the United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, which currently supports the work of over 300 organizations in more than 70 countries, and hope that contributions to the Fund will continue to increase to make it possible for victims of torture and members of their families to receive the assistance they need. We call on all States to contribute generously to the Voluntary Fund as part of a universal commitment for the rehabilitation of torture victims and their families so as to enable it to continue providing organizations with funds for psychological, medical, social, legal and economic assistance. We also call upon States to support the work of the domestic organizations through financial and other means, as well as create an enabling environment for the organizations to provide redress and rehabilitation for torture victims.

We further urge all States to become parties to the Convention against Torture and make the declarations provided under articles 21 and 22 of the Convention, on inter-State and individual complaints, as well as become parties to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture, in order to maximize transparency and accountability in their fight against torture.

28. With the view to celebrating the thirtieth anniversary of the Fund on 26 June 2011, the Board of Trustees decided to organize an exhibition of artwork and artefacts made by victims of torture. The exhibition was held at the Palais des Nations in Geneva from 21 to 30 June 2011 and presented paintings, sculptures and other types of artistic expression created by the victims as part of their rehabilitation process. The exhibition was opened on 27 June 2011 by the Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, Kassym-Jomart Tokayev; the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navanethem Pillay; and the Chair of the Board of Trustees, Mercedes Doretti.

VI. How to make a contribution to the Fund

29. Contributions to the Fund should always be marked as follows: "payee: United Nations Voluntary Fund for Victims of Torture, account CH". Payments may be made either by bank transfer (a) in United States dollars to "United Nations Geneva General Fund", account No. 485001802, J.P. Morgan Chase Bank, International Agencies Banking, 1166 Ave. of the Americas, 17th floor, New York, NY 10036-2708, United States of America (Swift code: CHAS US 33; ABA code: 021000021); (b) in euros to "United Nations Office at Geneva", account No. 23961901, J.P. Morgan Chase Bank, 125 London Wall, London EC2Y 5AJ, United Kingdom (Swift code: CHAS GB 2L, sort code: 60-92-42, IBAN: GB25 CHAS 6092 4223 9619 01); (c) in pounds sterling to "United Nations Office at Geneva", account No. 23961903, J.P. Morgan Chase Bank, 125 London Wall, London EC2Y 5AJ, United Kingdom (Swift code: CHAS GB 2L, sort code: 60-92-42, IBAN: GB25 CHAS 6092 4223 9619 03); (d) in Swiss francs to "United Nations Geneva General Fund", account No. 240-C0590160.0, UBS, rue du Rhône 8, Geneva 2, Switzerland (Swift code: UBSW CH ZH 12A; IBAN: CH65 0024 0240 CO59 0160 0); (e) in any other currency to "United Nations Geneva General Fund", account No. 240-C0590160.1, UBS, rue du Rhône 8, Geneva 2, Switzerland (Swift code: UBSW CH ZH 12A; IBAN: CH65 0024 0240 CO59 0160 1); or by cheque payable to "United Nations" addressed to: Trésorerie, Nations Unies, Palais des Nations, CH 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Donors are requested to inform the secretariat of the Fund and the

Resource Mobilization Unit of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights when a payment has been made (a copy of the bank transfer order or of the cheque would be appreciated) to facilitate effective follow-up on the official recording procedure and preparation of the reports of the Secretary-General.

VII. Conclusions and recommendations

30. **Pursuant to the appeals made by the General Assembly in its resolution 65/205 and by the Board of Trustees of the Fund as included in the previous report of the Secretary-General (A/65/265), donors are invited to pay their contributions to the Fund before the opening of the thirty-fifth session of the Board (to be held from 17 to 21 October 2011), in order that the contributions may be taken into account at that session.**

31. **In the light of the difficult financial situation faced in 2011, the General Assembly and the Board have also reiterated their call to regular donors to increase, as much as possible, their contributions to the Fund in order to provide the Board with the necessary resources to meet the growing needs of victims of torture and members of their families worldwide.**

32. **The Board strongly encourages Governments that have not yet contributed to the Fund to do so for the first time, preferably before September 2011.**